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DISARMAMENT FACT SHEETS

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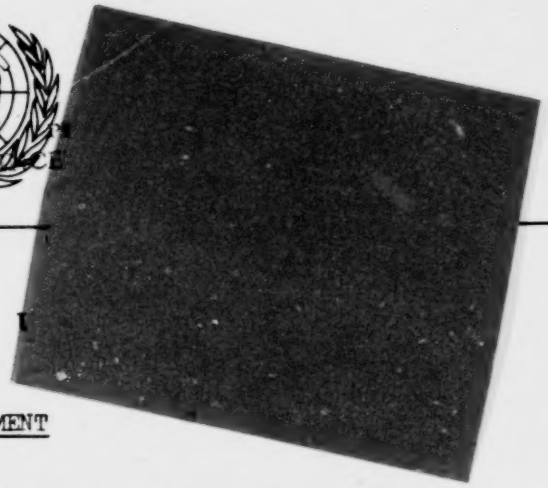

Fact Sheet No. 5 DPI/657

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Since nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to mankind, it is essential to halt the nuclear arms race and take steps towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, the General Assembly declared in the Final Document of the special session on disarmament.

Nuclear Weapon Effects: A single nuclear warhead can deliver more destructive power than all the conventional explosives ever used in warfare since the first use of gunpowder.

The two 1945 bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were relatively small, with a yield of no more than 20,000 kilotons -- equivalent to 20,000 tons of TNT. Yet they killed more than 100,000 people. Even more suffered severe burns, blast injuries and radiation effects, often resulting in lingering deaths in later months and years.

A single one-megaton weapon (equivalent to 1 million tons of TNT) exploded over a typical city of 1 million people with an area of 250 square kilometres would have these probable results : 270,000 killed by blast and fire, 90,000 killed by fallout, and another 90,000 injured. Two thirds of all buildings would be demolished or badly damaged, roads would be erased, water and gas mains would be destroyed. The city would in effect be obliterated. A single one-megaton blast would reduce it to a sea of blazing rubble.

It has been estimated that in a nuclear war, each of about 400 cities in the Northern Hemisphere might be blasted by the equivalent of 13 megatons -- about 1,000 Hiroshima bombs. Most of the inhabitants would be killed instantly. Civilization would come to an end in the countries involved in the conflict, while elsewhere millions would die from intense and widespread radioactive fallout. Long-term effects on the earth could include changes in climate, reduction of earth's protective ozone layer and severe genetic damage to later generations.

Nuclear Arsenals: Nuclear weapons are deployed by the tens of thousands, and current stocks are sufficient to destroy the world many times over. The strategic arms limitation (SALT) agreements reached by the USSR and United States limited but did not stop the growth of their nuclear arsenals.

Figures reported by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) indicated that the number of missile-deliverable warheads in the strategic arsenals of the United States and USSR increased from about 3,700 in 1970 to nearly 12,000 six years later. The 1978 total has been estimated at 14,000, with the US leading in the number of warheads, the USSR ahead in total explosive power.

These numbers do not include the more numerous "tactical" nuclear weapons deliverable by short or medium-range aircraft, missiles and artillery. Nor do the figures include the much smaller nuclear arsenals of China, France and the United Kingdom.

The total megatonnage now deployed is estimated to be equivalent to over 1 million Hiroshima bombs -- or three tons of conventional explosive for every man, woman and children earth.

Weapon Development: Nuclear weapons development and improvement have involved extensive testing. It is estimated that there have been more than 1,000 test explosions since 1945 -- 90 per cent of them conducted by the United States and USSR.

Delivery systems have become increasingly deadly, with sophisticated guidance and control for pinpoint accuracy in targeting of intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched missiles, cruise missiles -- many of them armed with multiple and independently targetable warheads.

Proposals for Nuclear Disarmament: Nuclear disarmament, the Assembly said at its special session, will require urgent negotiation of agreements at appropriate stages and with adequate measures of verification satisfactory to the States concerned for:

- Cessation of the qualitative improvement and development of nuclear-weapon systems;

- Cessation of the production of all types of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, and of the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes;

- A comprehensive, phased programme with agreed time-frames, whenever feasible, for progressive and balanced reduction of stockpiles of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, leading to their ultimate and complete elimination at the earliest possible time.

All nuclear-weapon States have been urged by the Assembly to proceed to consultations on initiation of "urgent negotiations" on the above measures.

Related Measures: The Assembly also has called for:

- Further strategic arms limitation (SALT) agreements between the US and USSR that will result in "significant reductions" as well as qualitative limitations on strategic arms.

- Action by the US and USSR to implement the declarations made by Presidents Carter and Brezhnev in 1977 favouring nuclear disarmament.

- Drafting of a treaty to ban all nuclear weapon testing, including underground tests, as "a matter of the highest priority". Since 1977 the US, USSR and United Kingdom have been negotiating on a draft treaty. The Assembly has urged them to conclude the negotiations urgently, so that the Committee on Disarmament can act on a draft treaty at the earliest possible date.

- Security guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon countries, perhaps through an international convention, by which the nuclear-weapon Powers would give assurances that they would not use or threaten use of nuclear weapons against States which do not have them.

- Support of efforts to create nuclear-weapon-free zones. The Treaty of Tlatelolco established a Latin American zone barring the presence of nuclear weapons. Other treaties have outlawed nuclear weapons in the Antarctic, outer space and the sea-bed.

The Assembly has called on all States to respect the continent of Africa and surrounding islands as a nuclear-weapon-free zone, in keeping with the Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa adopted in 1964 by the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Proposals also have been made for nuclear-weapon-free zones in South Asia, the Middle East, Central Europe and the South Pacific, as well as for "zones of peace" in the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia.

- Prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, involving obligations of the nuclear-weapon Powers to achieve nuclear disarmament, and of all States to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. The nuclear-weapon Powers also have been urged not to station nuclear weapons on the territories of States where there are none at present.

Crime Against Humanity: The Assembly has declared that the use of nuclear weapons would be "a crime against humanity" and should therefore be prohibited pending nuclear disarmament.

October 1979.

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